

REMARKS

Claims 1, 2, 4, 7-11 and 13-18 are pending in this application. By this Amendment, 1 and 18 are amended to distinguish over the cited references.

No new matter is added by this Amendment. Support for the language added to claims 1 and 18 can be found throughout the specification, for example at paragraphs 12-25 and Figures 1(a), 1(b), 5(a), 5(b), 6(a) and 6(b).

Entry of the amendments is proper under 37 CFR §1.116 since the amendments: (a) place the application in condition for allowance (for the reasons discussed herein); (b) do not raise any new issue requiring further search and/or consideration (as the amendments amplify issues previously discussed throughout prosecution); (c) do not present any additional claims without canceling a corresponding number of finally rejected claims; and (d) place the application in better form for appeal, should an appeal be necessary. The amendments are necessary and were not earlier presented because they are made in response to arguments raised in the final rejection and during the September 14, 2005 interview. Entry of the amendments is thus respectfully requested.

The courtesies extended to Applicant's representative by Examiner Mayes at the interview held September 14, 2005, are appreciated. The reasons presented at the interview as warranting favorable action are incorporated into the remarks below and constitute Applicants' record of the interview.

I. Allowable Subject Matter

Applicants note with appreciation that claims 8 and 11 are allowable.

II. Rejection Under 35 U.S.C. §103(a)

Claims 1, 2, 4, 7, 9, 10 and 13-18 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as allegedly being obvious over JP 2002-309922 ("JP '922") in view of U.S. Patent No. 4,718,926

("Nakamoto") and U.S. Patent No. 4,559,193 ("Ogawa"). This rejection is respectfully traversed.

The Patent Office alleges that JP '922 teaches all of the features recited in claims 1 and 18 except for bonding the ceramic plugs to the cells by disposing a bond material between the plugs and cell walls and firing the bond material. The Patent Office thus introduces (1) Nakamoto as allegedly teaching that the plugs are baked either after the honeycomb is baked or when the honeycomb is baked and (2) Ogawa as allegedly teaching fixing the plug parts to the honeycomb by baking by first applying a sealing material into the cells before inserting the plug parts, then firing the honeycomb and plug parts. Applicants respectfully disagree with the Patent Office's allegations.

Applicants submit that none of JP '922, Nakamoto and Ogawa teach or suggest forming a plugging member by extrusion molding and/or press molding and then inserting the plugging member formed in a predetermined shape into the cell while keeping the predetermined shape, as recited in claim 1 and 18. Claims 1 and 18 further require that a bond material is placed between the plugging member and the partition walls, and then firing the bond material.

JP '922 does not teach the formation of the plug part at all, but merely teaches that the plug part has a projection part that protrudes from the end face of the gas outflow side cell while tapering off toward the upstream side. See the Abstract of JP '922. In other words, as discussed during the September 14, 2005 interview, JP '922 does not teach or suggest that the plugging member is formed by extrusion molding and/or press molding and is then inserted in a predetermined shape into the cell while keeping the predetermined shape, as required in claims 1 and 18. In addition, JP '922 does not teach or suggest that bonding is achieved by disposing a bond material between the plugging member and the partition walls and then firing the bond material as required in claims 1 and 18. Furthermore, JP '922 does not teach

or suggest the method for plugging a cell of a honeycomb structure recited in claims 1 and 18, but merely shows the shape of the finished plugging portion.

Neither Nakamoto nor Ogawa remedy these deficiencies. Nakamoto teaches that the plugging member is made of a paste that is injected into each entrance and exit of the honeycomb structure. See column 3, lines 4-8 of Nakamoto. Thus, as discussed during the September 14, 2005 interview, Nakamoto does not teach or suggest forming a plugging member by extrusion molding and/or press molding and then inserting this plugging member into the cell as required by claims 1 and 18. Furthermore, Nakamoto teaches that the plugs or clogging material is a paste that is injected into each entrance and exit of the honeycomb structure. See column 3, lines 4-20 of Nakamoto. As such, Nakamoto merely teaches plugging a honeycomb structure with paste, not inserting the plugging member formed in a predetermined shape into the cell while keeping the predetermined shape as recited in claims 1 and 18.

Ogawa teaches that the sealing material contains a slurry and a sealing material green body. See column 5, lines 14-16 of Ogawa. The sealing material green body is a kneaded pasty sealing material green body that can contain raw clay, kaolin and other plastic ingredients. See column 5, lines 20-23 of Ogawa. In other words, Ogawa teaches introducing the sealing material to the ceramic honeycomb structural body and then pressing the sealing material green body into the ceramic honeycomb structural body. See column 5, line 54 through column 6, line 25 of Ogawa. Ogawa teaches that the sealing material can be pressed into the honeycomb structural body from above. See column 6, lines 17-29 of Ogawa. In other words, the green body has some fluidity and may be pressed into the cells, thus causing a change in shape of the plugging member. Ogawa does not teach or suggest inserting the plugging member formed in a predetermined shape into the cell while keeping the predetermined shape as recited in claims 1 and 18. Ogawa teaches only that a sealing

material in slurry or paste form may be pressed into the honeycomb body, thereby altering the material's shape. Thus, as with Nakamoto, Ogawa does not teach or suggest inserting the plugging member formed in a predetermined shape into the cell while keeping the predetermined shape as recited in claims 1 and 18.

In addition, contrary to the Patent Office's assertions, Ogawa does not teach or suggest that bonding is achieved by disposing a bond material between the plugging member and the partition walls and firing the bond material as required in claims 1 and 18. Instead, Ogawa teaches that the sealing material is applied in two forms, one being in the form of a slurry and the other being in the form of a kneaded pasty green body. See column 3, lines 22-24 of Ogawa. Ogawa does not teach or suggest that this slurry is a bonding material. Instead, Ogawa teaches that this slurry is another form of the sealing material.

Applicants submit that even if JP '922, Nakamoto and Ogawa were to have been combined, the method recited in claims 1 and 18 would not have been achieved. As discussed during the September 14, 2005 interview, none of JP '922, Nakamoto and Ogawa teach or suggest that the plugging member is formed by extrusion molding and/or press molding and is then inserted in a predetermined shape into the cell while keeping the predetermined shape as required in claims 1 and 18. Furthermore, none of JP '922, Nakamoto and Ogawa teach or suggest that bonding is achieved by disposing a bond material between the plugging member and the partition walls and then firing the bond material as required in claims 1 and 18.

For the foregoing reasons, Applicants submit that JP '922, Nakamoto and Ogawa, in combination or alone, do not teach or suggest all of the features recited in claim 1, 2, 4, 7-11 and 13-18. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection are thus respectfully requested.

III. Conclusion

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and prompt allowance of claims 1, 2, 4, 7-11 and 13-18 are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number set forth below.

Respectfully submitted,

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